Appendix B
Engineers – A "Corps" in the Army's Regimental System
2 August 1985*

* Appendix B has been retyped; however, it retains the spelling, punctuation, and style of the original.

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SUBJECT: Engineers—A "Corps" in the Army's Regimental System

The Army's Regimental System Purpose—"To enhance combat effectiveness through a framework that provides the opportunity for affiliation, develops loyalty and commitment, fosters an extended sense of belonging, improves unit esprit and institutionalizes the warfighting ethos.

As one addresses potential ways the Army Corps of Engineers might seek to implement the above purpose the numerous pros and cons of each alternative seem inconclusive and each prompts as many opposing such an option as supporters. In analyzing the conflicting arguments in the endless debates that arise whenever the subject is addressed the conclusion obtains that there is no simple solution to meet all the design parameters of CSA and to obtain the very appropriate purposes articulated above. The questions then to be answered are:

—Why: What is different?

—Are our assumptions valid?

—What can be/should be done?

—How can the Corps of Engineers obtain the purposes of the Regimental System?
Let me address each of these, in turn—because the purposes are valid to the engineer force in today's Army. The mission then is to determine in what form the engineer of that Army will participate in the Army's system and obtain the purposes desired.

First, to answer the question of why can't we develop for the engineer force a system of regiments like those of other combat arms. After considerable dialogue and thought—after observing how others grapple with the issues and their changing thoughts while thinking their way through the pros and cons—I conclude that the reason is that each attempt provides an organization scheme that is artificial. That is—each person recognizes that in fact the purposes will not be best obtained by artificial associations that do not provide the bonding or affiliation that such associations would be intended to produce.

In analyzing why each organizational scheme associating battalions in regimental groups provides an arrangement that is artificial it becomes readily apparent that engineers have their strongest feeling of association in two directions—to their branch and to their battalion or a past battalion, or in the case of separate engineer companies to a parent organization. Because engineers are organized in battalion entities for the most part and assigned to Divisions, or Engineer Brigades or Groups, or perhaps stationed as an independent battalion at a larger divisional installation, broader associations—other than existing combat association—do not provide real associations and are not perceived as appropriate. Where those broader associations exist, such as the 20th Engineer Brigade

or 2d Engineer Group, they are current force structure organizations, mission oriented and therefore do not fit design parameters. In addition, they provide no ready association for Divisional Engineer Battalions.

The Corps of Engineers' long history of battlefield action is maintained at two levels—overall Corps of Engineers and at battalion. Both lineage and heraldry tie the present to past battlefield exploits at battalion level. Because engineer contributions to battle have been in the past so extensive throughout the length and breadth of battle, those contributions embrace combat, combat support and combat service support functions on the battlefield. That total story is found only in the story of the engineers as a Corps—embracing all theatres, all campaigns, all construction and nation building and by engineer units in great numbers whose designation and individual lineage today rests often only in the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) whose exploits are wrapped in the history of the whole "Corps of Engineers."

Are our assumptions valid? In addressing this question, I believe the above identifies as invalid the assumption that we will obtain greater bonding or esprit in the developed regimental association based on ties to past lineage. The orientation of current serving soldiers to their battalion, and the strong history and ties of the Corps provide the greater opportunity for affiliation, for developing loyalty and commitment and further fostering a sense of belonging. Because we train and operate as battalions, unit esprit and the warfighting ethos will not be extended by regimental associations.

The second assumption to be addressed is the suggestion that we need to do something—that action is needed within the engineer force to further the purposes articulated above. I believe the strong identification of the Corps of Engineers as a "Corps" probably provides a more purposeful affiliation than that of many other branches. That is due in part to its long history but also the fact that it retains a serving "Chief" and has an additional bonding mission of historical significance in serving the nation. Certainly, the identification of soldiers for their serving and past battalions should not be broken by any action to be taken. The fact that the CSA has decoupled the personnel assignment system from the regimental system (and that homebasing remains a voluntary way soldiers can return to a desired CONUS base and unit) removes a requirement to associate battalions in a regiment to foster personnel assignments.

A third assumption offered is that engineers need to organize as regiments because other combat arms are organizing as regiments. That argument tends to be artificial as I addressed above and further avoids recognizing that infantry has in the past fought as regiments whereas engineers have typically fought as battalions and further dismisses the very large contribution of combat engineers throughout the battlefield—combat, combat support, and construction.

I would argue that there are reasons to not "stand fast"—that there are significant actions that can be taken within the Engineer force to obtain the purposes of the Regimental System enumerated by CSA.

What can be/should be done? Or stated in more direct form—in consideration of design parameters and the purposes intended, and the way engineers have been (history and lineage) and are (modern day realities) organized, what should be done to insure the purposes of the regimental system are obtained for the engineer force?

To answer that, I sought to further identify strengths and weaknesses of our current principal bonding affiliations—with the Corps of Engineers as a branch and with the engineer battalion.

—The Corps of Engineers is a significant bonding element for engineer officers. I perceive such a bond for the enlisted soldier at initial entry is not so strong yet develops as the soldier advances into NCO ranks. Thus, ways to the identification of the enlisted soldier with his "Corps" are appropriate. When one recognizes that most officers never serve at Fort Leonard Wood and most enlisted engineer soldiers never serve at Fort Belvoir (the first across the board opportunity at the SFC level advanced course), it is readily obvious that the collocation of engineer officer and NCO training at Fort Leonard Wood with the engineer enlisted training would provide opportunities to fortify common bonds and affiliation.

—Engineer battalions provide a significant point of pride in service and affiliation for the officer and NCO. Because of the wide geographical distribution of these units, repetitive assignments don't often occur for officers, and are more prevalent for enlisted soldiers in special type units such as airborne or topographic battalions. Within army engineer battalions, lineage, significance of historical contribution, and availability of museums vary widely. In seeking to further bonding that will live and grow—rather than be unwieldy and thus through erosion fail to obtain the purposes desired. That which can be done at battalion level to focus bonding I believe is currently being accomplished with leaders focusing on the unit, the mission, and emphasis on soldiers belonging to a first class outfit. To extend that battalion bonding to the future, to maintain bond/affiliation that is meaningful and continuing, is difficult to accomplish. One way would be to continue the identification by the continued wearing of that battalion crest. Can battalions feasibly maintain the rosters, establish the museums and maintain the constants that foster continued affiliation? What happens with force changes? My analysis is that, whereas engineers feel strong association with the battalions with those they serve, or have served, and would be happy to wear the crest, the purposes identified for the regimental system will for the most part not be obtained and will logistically be a problem.

How then to proceed? I believe the purposes of the regimental framework articulated by CSA are best captured in identification of the "Corps of Engineers" as a "Corps"—embodying the lineage of Corps of Engineer contributions to the Army in each battle and campaign since Bunker Hill in 1775; capturing the diversity of engineer contributions to all parts of the battlefield from close combat with armor and infantry in the forward brigade area to combat support and construction throughout the theatre; incorporating the contributions of all, eliminating none; providing a way to include all individuals in the Corps to include the training base; providing the potential to extend through the total Army. This would parallel similar designation in the British Army where the Corps of Royal Engineers is drawn from throughout the U.K. rather than the more narrow regiments (geographically associated) of other arms. It would identify the distribution of engineers throughout the U.S. Army—every echelon, in every theatre, on every battlefield, in every way.

Concept of execution: The establishment of the Corps of Engineers as the affiliation embodiment for engineers in the Army's Regimental system would entail several actions.

Ceremonial Home of the Corps. The home of the Corps would be at the location of the USAES, currently Fort Belvoir, passing to Fort Leonard Wood when the school and proponency moves in 1989. Location of the ceremonial home at the Engineer Center and School would maintain the tie to the active Army at the place where (after consolidation) each soldier, officer and enlisted, received his/her qualification training.

Colors. Corps of Engineers colors will be designated in coordination with the Institute of Heraldry and maintained at the ceremonial "Corps" home.

Crest. A crest for the Corps of Engineers as a "Corps" (as separate from MACOM) will be designated in coordination with the Institute of Heraldry. Affiliation—joining the "Corps"—would be recognized by presentation of the "Corps of Engineers" crest at AIT graduation, warrant officer appointment ceremony, and EOBC graduation. Persons entering the "Corps" by other means (branch transfer, reclassification) will have their crest presented at an appropriate ceremony. This is similar to the British presentation when the engineer becomes a "Royal" engineer.

Leaders of the Corps. The "Corps" ceremonial leaders would be the incumbent Chief of Engineers and the CSM to the Chief of Engineers. They would be assisted by Distinguished Members of the Regiment chosen from active and retired officers and noncommissioned officers chosen for that purpose.

Battalions. Battalions will be highlighted throughout "Corps of Engineers" museums, publications, and in the mess (e.g., Crests in the Castle Room, Fort Belvoir Officer Mess should go to Fort Leonard Wood). Battalions will be encouraged to develop ways to portray the battalions historical accomplishments through individual museums and literature. Battalion crests will be worn when serving in the battalion. In recognition of the strong battalion affiliation of engineers, engineer officer and enlisted soldiers would continue to wear branch collar insignia with battalion numerals after leaving a battalion (as permitted for regimental affiliation—would require exception to policy but appropros to the Engineer Force. Assigned battalion collar insignias will take precedence when serving in a battalion. Battalion leadership will foster that the strength of the "Corps" is to be found in its accomplishments by its many diverse battalions, historical lineage of the battalion and the significance of the battalion as part of its parent Division (or Brigade or other association).

Conclusion; By establishing the "Corps of Engineers" as the bonding affiliation entity for engineers yet retaining maximum identification of individuals with the "Corps" basic fighting unit, the battalion, we have a solution that

—maximizes historical ties

—is realistic to today's Army

—provides affiliation opportunities

—is inclusive, no one is excluded

—provides for continued battalion identification and focus

—is not tied to personnel system but facilitates voluntary homebasing

—avails new resource problems at battalion level

—is not artificial

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